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XIV.—*Some Account of Charms, Talismans, and Felicitous Appendages worn about the person, or hung up in houses, &c. used by the Chinese.\** By JOHN ROBERT MORRISON, Esq., Cor. M.R.A.S.

Read 2d July 1831.

*Charms* may be divided into three kinds :

- I. A kind of talisman, worn generally about the person, but sometimes also hung up on the walls of houses.
- II. Little sacred books, which are suspended from the girdle in small silk bags, and hence called *Pei-king*, “Girdle-scriptures.”
- III. Spells, called *Foo-chow*.

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I. *Talismans*.—Under this head are arranged some charms which are not properly speaking talismans, but for which no other generic name could be found.

1. *Tsëen-këen*, “Money-swords.” These consist of a number of old copper coins called cash, strung together in the form of a sword, and kept straight by a piece of iron running up the middle. They are hung at the heads of beds, that the supposed presence of the monarchs under whose reigns the cash were coined may have the effect of keeping away ghosts and evil spirits. They are used chiefly in houses or rooms where persons have committed suicide or suffered a violent death. Sick persons use them, also, in order to hasten their recovery.

2. *Pih kea so*, “The hundred family-lock.” To obtain this a man goes round among his friends, and having obtained from one hundred different persons three or four of the copper coins called *cash*, each, he himself adds whatever money is requisite, and has a lock made, which he hangs on his child’s neck, for the purpose of locking him, as it were, to life, and making the one hundred persons sureties for his attaining old age.

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\* A series of specimens of the articles described in this paper was presented by Mr. Morrison to the Royal Asiatic Society at the same time with this paper, and is now arranged in the Museum of the Society.

3. *King keuen so*, "Neck-ring lock." This is worn by grown females as well as by children, for the same purpose as the preceding.

4. A charm on which are these inscriptions: *San to kew joo*, "the three *manys* and the nine *likes*;" and *E keae méi show*, "to obtain long-eyebrowed longevity." The three *manys* are: *To fuh*, *to show*, *to nan tsze*, many (years of) happiness, many (years of) long life, and many sons. The nine *likes* are expressed in the two following stanzas of a song in the *She king*, in which a minister who has in the six preceding songs been receiving the praises of his sovereign, answers by numerous wishes on his behalf.

1.  
Teën paou ting urh,  
E mǒ puh hing,  
Joo shan,—joo fow,—  
Joo kang,—joo ling,—  
Joo chuen che fang che ;  
E mǒ puh tsǎng.

2.  
Joo yuě che hǎng,—  
Joo jih che shing,—  
Joo nan shan che show,—  
Puh keěn puh pǎng,—  
Joo sung pih che mow ;  
Woo puh urh hwǒ ching.

Heaven preserve and establish thee,  
That in all things thou mayest prosper,—  
Mayest be like the hills,—like the high hills,—  
Like the mountain tops,—like the lofty mountains,  
Like the straight-forward path of the sea,  
That there may be nothing wanting to thee.

\* \* \* \*

Like the moon, constantly revolving,—  
Like the sun, ascending upwards,—  
In longevity, like the Southern hills,  
Which never fail nor fall,—  
Like the luxuriant foliage of the fir.  
Each of these things mayest thou successively receive.

5. *Koo-tung king*, "The old brass mirror," is a charm which is supposed to possess the virtue of immediately healing any who have become mad by the sight of a spirit or demon, by their merely taking a glance at themselves in it. By the rich it is kept in their chief apartments, for the purpose of keeping away spirits.

6. *Pei tsang han yuh*, "The jointly interred *yuh* stone of *Han*." It is said that, under the *Han* dynasty, when a rich person died, each of his friends dropped a *yuh* stone into his coffin. Should any one obtain one of these stones it will preserve him from evil spirits and from fire.

7. *Chang poo*, *Gae*, *keěn*, "Sword of *Chang poo* (*Acorus Calamus*), and

*Gae* plants." On the fifth day of the fifth moon, sprigs of each of these plants are stuck up at the doors of houses, in order to deter all manner of evils from entering. Hence the following couplet is sometimes written on the door-posts of houses :

Gae ke chaou pih fuh,

Poo keën chan tsëen tsae.

The *Gae* banner calls forth a hundred blessings ;

The *Poo* sword destroys a thousand evils.

8. *Taou foo*, the " Peach charm," consists of a sprig of peach blossoms, which, on the first day of the first moon, is placed in some districts at the head of the door of every house, to drive away demons and malignant spirits. This gives rise to the following couplet :

Le yew jin ho seu mûh tǝ ;

Sze woo seay yen yung *taou foo*.

If the village possess virtue, what need is there for the wooden-tongued bell ?\*

If the thoughts be free from impurity, of what use is the *peach-charm* ?

9. *Ke lin*. The fabulous animal which is said to have appeared at the birth of CONFUCIUS. Hence worn by children for good fortune.

10. *Pǎ kwa*. The eight diagrams, cut on stone or metal, are often worn as charms.

11. *Show taou*, " Longevity Peach." A charm for long life.

12. *Hoo-loo*, " The Gourd." Gourd-bottles being formerly carried by old men on their backs, figures of them, made either of copper or of the wood of old men's coffins, are worn as charms for longevity ; the former round the neck, the latter round the wrist.

13. *Hoo-chaou*, " Tiger's-claw." This is a charm against sudden fright.

14. *Yǔh yin*, " *Yǔh*-seal." This is a stone worn by children on their foreheads or wrists, on which are cut short sentences, such as *Fǔh joo tung hae*, happiness like the Eastern sea (in extent and continuance). It is supposed to suppress fright, and to show whether a child is well or ill, by a clear appearance in the one case and a dark appearance in the other.

15. A seal of the *Taou* sect, worn as a charm, as well as for stamping spells.

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\* That is, instruction in virtue. The wooden-tongued bell was used by heralds in ancient times to call the multitude together to listen to their messages and instructions from their prince.

16. A charm bearing the eight diagrams, the Chinese signs of the zodiac, spells, and words expressive of its use, *viz.* to suppress and destroy evil spirits.

17. A charm of the *Taou* sect, consisting of a small knife, sword, and triangle. It is worn chiefly by females about the person, in order to avert the ill will of evil spirits and rustic demons. There are seals for similar purposes.

18. There are a variety of charms, of various kinds, for which there are no names and no peculiar uses; but they are considered felicitous, and are therefore worn by the poorer classes, who cannot buy the more valuable charms.

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II. Little sacred books, called *Pei king*. From the specimen sent, these seem to contain only the pronunciation of Indian words, and they appear to belong only to the Bud'h sect. People of property buy them for their children, and pay priests to repeat the prayers, &c. contained in them, in order to preserve their children from premature death. The specimen sent is called *Ta pei chow*, "a prayer to the greatly compassionate one."

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III. *Spells*.—These are formed by a fanciful union of several characters, to which astrology is sometimes added; and in those of the Bud'h sect Sanscrit or (which they appear more to resemble) Thibetian words. The book which accompanies the specimens is on the subject of spells, and in the first volume it contains a few of these foreign words. These spells are sometimes kept about the person, and sometimes pasted on walls or over doors. Some, also, are used as cures for sick persons, by being either written on leaves and then transferred into some liquid, or by being written on paper, burnt, and thrown into the liquid, after which the patient has to drink off the liquid and the spell together.

There are spells for almost every deity. Among the most common are :

1. *Yin-foo*, "Sealed-spells." These are of the *Taou* sect, written on yellow paper with red ink, and then stamped with a seal kept in the temples before the idols.

2. *San këö foo*, "Triangular spell." This is a paper with a spell written on it, and folded up in a triangular shape. It is fastened to the dress of children, to preserve them from evil spirits and from sickness.

Besides these there are many others of various kinds, such as different forms of the characters *ful*, prosperity or happiness; and *show*, longevity. Among these is one called *Pih show too*, "the map of a hundred shows," being a hundred different forms of that character: of course many of the forms are very fanciful.

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There are also numerous figures of deified men, &c. which, though not properly speaking charms, are considered felicitous, and therefore hung up in houses and honoured, some constantly, others on particular occasions. Of the specimens sent, the following is an explanation:

1. *Kwei-sing*. The spirit of the North Polar star, the patron of learning. It is drawn standing alone on the head of the *Gaou*, a large fish, and kicking *Tow*, the Ursa Major, to represent the power of knowledge. The pencil in its right hand is held up on high, to signify the dignity of literature. There is a print from an engraving on stone, in which the eight characters *Ching sin, sew shin, kih ke, ful le*, are written in a fanciful manner, so as to resemble the figure of the *Kwei-sing*. The seal characters at the top are the same as those of which the figure is formed.

2. *Chang-seën*. This is a deified man, who having shot the heavenly dog, which often devoured children, is worshipped by parents for the purpose of keeping their children from harm. In the drawing he is represented shooting the dog, with his children around him.

3. A representation of *Pwan koo*, the first human being; at least so marked by the seller: but it is more probably intended for *Füh he*, the inventor of the eight diagrams.

4. *Chang-teën-sze*, the imperial astronomer. The first who filled this office was *Chang-leang*, and his descendants are said to have succeeded him uninterruptedly. They are divided into two families, named *Kung* and *Chang*, who always intermarry; thus forming, from the union of *Kung* and *Chang*, the surname *Chang*. These deified astronomers are supposed to inform their worshippers when any great calamities, such as plague, famine, pestilence, &c. are about to take place. The introduction of European astronomers is said to have put the *Chang* family out of office, though the emperors still grant them sustenance.

5. *Ho, hō, urh seën*. The two genii, harmony and union. These are two partners in trade, who were always successful, and are therefore deified and worshipped by tradespeople. The two red animals represented flying

above them are intended for bats, which are considered the precursors of happiness and prosperity.

6. *Füh, lüh, and show*. Happiness, emolument or office, and longevity, with longevity's children.

7. *Heuen tan*. A man of great strength, who lived among the hills until invited by the tyrant CHOW to his assistance. On his way towards CHOW he met a tiger, which he bestrode and made it answer him as a horse. The object in worshipping him is to free houses of evil spirits.

8. *Chung-kwei*, the destroyer of demons. This was a strong and violent tempered man, who was deified on account of his antipathy to demons. He is sometimes represented trampling a demon under his feet; at others, introducing happiness under the symbol of a bat.

9. *Ke-lin sung tsze*, the *Ke-lin* presenting a child. This animal is said to have appeared just before the birth of CONFUCIUS, and is therefore worshipped by those who wish to have talented children.

10. *Yin yuen sae*. This is by one person said to be a god of lightning; by another he is said to be the son of the tyrant CHOW, who having received his education from a supernatural being, was able to exercise, with murderous effect, the magical skill thereby acquired, when he was called on to defend his father. Hence he is represented moving on the wheels of the wind and the fire, wearing a string of skulls round his neck, and holding a spear and a death-bell in his hands.

11. *Tsze-wei*. A spirit who, by restraining the voracious animal *Pe-hew*, prevents it from doing mischief, particularly from devouring the sun and moon.

12. *Tsae-pih-sing-keun*, the god of wealth. Before him are vessels of gold and silver ore.